

THE EFFECT OF BEHAVIOR CONTROL STRATEGIES UPON  
THE DISRUPTIVE STUDENT: A CASE STUDY

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A Field Report  
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by  
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An Abstract of a Field Report by  
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December 1982  
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The Problem. A fourth-grade student had disrupted class, especially during specials, rather frequently. This case study was designed to determine if positive reinforcement and other techniques would decrease the frequency of the problem.

Procedure. Meetings were held with staff. Data was collected on a daily basis for more than nine months. Data including frequency and specification of reward and punishment was analyzed. Follow-up meetings were held.

Findings. Social reinforcement and extra privileges based on a reward system were found to be very effective. Activity curtailment and removal to a time-out room were also useful when the previous strategies were not successful. These programs must be very carefully structured.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Rationale for Study

Interest in the disruptive student developed because of this writer's duties as principal at Maxwell Elementary School. A fourth grader there disrupted class rather frequently. In fact, he caused more problems than any other student. Yet, he was capable of behaving appropriately when he tried. It became obvious that he needed a great deal of help because he craved attention even if it were negative.

#### Background on Student

The student was a ten-year-old male of average intelligence. His mother was thirty-five, and his father was thirty-seven. His mother was a housewife; his father drove a truck and was sometimes away from home. This was the second marriage for both. In the family were also two sisters aged five and a half and thirteen. There was intense competition between the subject and his younger sister.

The student was a blue baby at birth, however, he did not require oxygen. He started kindergarten in Oregon and attended first and most of second grade at Elkhart in

the North Polk schools. He was referred to the Area 11 Education Agency (AEH) while at Elkhart because he was very disruptive. He moved from the district before an evaluation was made and had attended school in Maxwell since then. He was referred again in third grade because of his disruptiveness and was staffed into a resource room on November 24, 1980, with goals of improving math skills, encouraging better social skills, and bettering self-concept.

A Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children evaluation indicated he had a full scale IQ of 89, which placed him in the average range. His psychological verbal test results indicated his weaknesses were arithmetic reasoning, auditory memory, and analysis of abstract design. There was a significant discrepancy between verbal and performance scores. Performance scores were average but verbal scores were below average.

He enjoyed good health and rarely missed school. His hearing and vision were normal. He was originally diagnosed as having a moderate language disorder, but he had improved to the point that he no longer received treatment.

This student sometimes had difficulties in the classroom. One day at the prompting of another student, he pulled his pants down while the teacher was in the hall for a minute. He laughed even when situations were not humorous, and shouted out answers and comments. This student's greatest problems, however, appeared when he was placed in

a less structured setting. Recesses, vocal music, art, physical education, and media were areas of greatest concern. He also had some problems on the bus and on his way to and from the bus.

At recess he might strike other students with his fists or a stick. During the previous year a playground teacher sent him in for threatening other students with a tire iron he said he had found in a ditch. In classes that are conducted out of the classroom, such as physical education, vocal music, art, and media, he had some of the same problems he had in the classroom. They occurred more frequently, however. The Area Comprehensive Evaluation Services of Des Moines reported in a June, 1981, summary that his behavior could develop into a conduct disorder as he grew older unless he got help.

#### Statement of Problem

This study will attempt to determine the effects of various strategies upon disruptive behaviors of a fourth-grade student.

#### Significance of Problem

A recent study that appeared in the March, 1982, Principal reveals that discipline is still considered to be of utmost importance to parents of school children.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marilee C. Rist, "The Principal's Poll," Principal, LIX (1982), 31-33.



Discipline was defined as "acceptable behavior." A safe, ordered school where students could be taught the skills of reading, writing, and math was the parents' goal.

Educators have long been concerned with proper management of the classroom. Teachers must create an environment in which students behave appropriately before the students can learn. Therefore, the principal is very concerned about the disruptive student because unacceptable behavior can make learning difficult for everyone else in the class. This student can also influence others to become involved in causing problems at school. The way such a student learns must be analyzed.

#### Data Gathering

A case study approach was used to gather data concerning the subject over a period of time beginning on October 24, 1980. Part of this data came from direct observation of the student. Teachers reported to the principal on behavior that was noteworthy. A checklist was handed to each teacher on which the setting of each observation was explained. Careful anecdotal records were kept by teachers and principal. Cumulative records were also used to give insight on health and personal data. Staffings were held periodically. There were also informal conferences with other students, the student himself, and the student's parents. These conferences included bus drivers, aides, and anyone else who worked with the student.

### Treatment of Data

The descriptive approach, along with tables and charts when appropriate, were used in this study. No statistical tests were used. A limitation of this study was that it involved only one person in one setting. The study detailed student behaviors. Strategies employed are explained and were the outgrowth of staffings. Everyone involved in the staffings had an opportunity to make suggestions and recommendations. The principal and teachers made the final decision. Readings were used. Outcomes were reported and analyzed by the principal and the AEA staff.

The following chapters will include a review of pertinent literature, the methodology of the study, the presentation of data, a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A study that appeared in the March, 1982, Principal reveals that discipline is still considered to be of utmost importance to parents of school children.<sup>1</sup> To them, discipline meant "acceptable behavior." A safe, ordered school where students could be taught the skills of reading, writing, and math was their goal.

Educators have long been concerned with proper management of the class, for teachers must create an environment in which students behave appropriately before the students can learn. Therefore, the principal is very concerned about the disruptive student because this student can make learning very difficult for others. This student can also influence classmates to cause problems at school.

In considering the problem of classroom disruption the first area that must be examined is self-esteem, particularly how it is effected by environment. Helen Bee points out that children from poverty environments, on the whole, do not think as well of themselves as do children from middle-class environments.<sup>2</sup> Their self-esteem is

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<sup>1</sup>Rist, pp. 31-33.

<sup>2</sup>Helen Bee, The Developing Child (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 338-39.

lower. In fact, the more economically and interpersonally deprived the child's environment has been, the lower his or her self-esteem is likely to be. A study by Whiteman and Deutsch states that children who live in dilapidated housing, whose parents had minimal educational aspirations for them, and who experienced little conversation in the home were much more likely to suffer from low self-esteem than were children from families with equivalent incomes in which there were higher aspirations for the children and more conversation at home. Children with low self-esteem do not do as well in school. These children believe they are not competent, at least not at middle-class school tasks. This leads them to expect failure, and they then go about setting things up to maximize that possibility. When they fail, it may be due to not trying. Each failure, in turn, reinforces the belief that they cannot succeed anyway.<sup>1</sup>

Responsibility for their actions may be viewed differently by poor children and middle-class children. Poor children are more likely to perceive responsibility for their actions as lying outside themselves, whereas middle-class children see themselves as responsible for and in control of their own actions. With the former point of view there is no use trying if what happens to you is the result of either chance or luck and is under the control of

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<sup>1</sup>Bee, p. 338.

others; increased effort will not be accompanied by better results. When you believe you control your own fate, trying makes a great difference. The effect of such an attitude on the teacher-learning situation in school is obvious.<sup>1</sup>

Many students who have low self-esteem become egocentric. That is, certain behavior has developed as a result of constant attention and praise. Children early become used to receiving attention to their demands; and when their behavior becomes habitual, they employ many devices to maintain their position as the center of interest and attraction. Various techniques are used to gain this kind of attention; temper tantrums are examples of the more extreme cases. Egocentrism becomes especially bad when a child tries to gain the satisfaction of his request by using prolonged temper tantrums. Highly developed egocentric traits may result in the individual experiencing serious frustration with members of his social group.<sup>2</sup>

The desire for attention is very strong in individuals of all ages. To receive social approval, for example, is more rewarding than to be ignored by others. When one's usual behavior fails to bring approval from others, one may strive to gain attention by the use of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Lester D. Crow, New Approaches to the Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence (Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1978), pp. 180-81.

unconventional behavior. If children do not receive the praise they desire, they may try deliberately to be disobedient so that they will be reprimanded. Any display of excessive attention-getting behavior on the part of a child should be ignored. Normal children soon learn to change these antics to behavior that is more acceptable.<sup>1</sup>

One should not expect greater consideration from associates than one is willing to give them. Yet many individuals develop behavior that produces attention-getting responses. These attention-getting devices may be learned in infancy as when the baby cries to receive the kind of attention that he or she craves. The older child asks questions, romps, gets in the way, or sulks in order to gain attention.<sup>2</sup> Other techniques include crying without physical cause, throwing things, strutting, imitating mother's use of rouge and lipstick, among young children, and boasting of personal or family prowess, displaying bad manners of speech and writing, among adolescents. And even though an individual is successful in daily activities, success may be taken for granted by his or her associates. If passive approval is not sufficient, he or she may strive for more active recognition.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vernon F. Jones and Louise A. Jones, Responsible Classroom Discipline: Creating Positive Learning Environments and Solving Problems (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1981), p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>Crow, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The individual may have such a strong desire for attention that he or she is moved toward abnormal and socially undesirable means of satisfying the urge. Attention-getting is one of the many causes of lying among children. In order to gain prestige, the young boy who feels inferior to his peers in commendable achievement regales his pals with tales about his great prowess or his unusual experiences. If the story is not convincing enough, he may be forced to bring evidence of his involvement. Consequently, he is impelled to justify his boastings by participation in delinquent activities.<sup>1</sup>

Another important attention-getting defense mechanism is that of striving for sympathy. To attempt to secure the sympathy of others in order to avoid a problem or obstacle is known as the mechanism of sympathy. Some children, who are used to much attention but are not getting it, will seek the sympathy of others by indicating how tired they are, how unfair their parents are, or how rigid their teachers are. They turn to others for solace because they feel inadequate and frustrated.<sup>2</sup>

Aggression is an excellent example of an attention-getting defense mechanism. It implies that the individual makes blind attacks as a reaction to frustration. Aggression is not always directed against the immediate cause of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 183.

the frustration. A schoolchild who has been subjected to criticism or ironic comments by his instructor often takes his irritation out on those he can command. They may be quite innocent. He may also bang doors and kick the furniture. The need for a scapegoat is a key.<sup>1</sup> Aggressive behavior may also be directed against the individual him or herself. This results from exaggerated guilt feelings.<sup>2</sup>

Aggression can be considered a form of psychobiologic energy, which is either innate or arises in response to frustration. Each individual has a certain amount of aggressive energy to expend daily whether in constructive or destructive activities. Aggression can be manifested in overt hostility (including fighting and sexual attack) or covert hostile attitudes, be introjected into one's self in the form of self-hate or masochism, sublimated into play or sports and healthy self-assertiveness. Everyone must be able to express aggression wholeheartedly in order to satisfy needs.<sup>3</sup>

Alice Harris did a study to determine whether there was consistency in the observed performance of aggressive behavior for ten normal and ten aggressive boys (fifth and

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<sup>1</sup>C. I. Sandstrom, The Psychology of Childhood and Adolescence (Middlesex, England: Penguin Book Ltd., 1969), p. 152.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Claude H. Miller, "Aggression in Everyday Life," American Journal of Psychoanalysis, XXXIX, No. 2 (1979), 103-104.



sixth graders) across two school settings, classroom and playground. Data demonstrated that all subjects engaged in some aggressive behavior in both settings. Aggressive subjects were considerably more aggressive than the normal subjects on the playground. They were more aggressive in the classroom as well. However, the differences did not reach statistical significance. Analyses of between-setting differences for the two groups revealed that while aggressive subjects were more aggressive on the playground than in the classroom, differences for the normal group were slight.<sup>1</sup>

Regression is another important defense mechanism. It involves a return to earlier more primitive forms of behavior. A grownup who cannot have his or her own way may scream and act like a child, while a child may revert to the baby stage to win the struggle.<sup>2</sup>

Rationalization, a defense mechanism, employs the justification of an act after it has been performed to avoid feelings of guilt due to blameworthy behavior. It also appears in eager assurances of, for example, enjoyment of a situation that is actually experienced as disturbing and unpleasant. A pupil who has done poorly in schoolwork may make excuses by claiming that the teacher was unfair

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<sup>1</sup>Alice Harris, "An Empirical Test of the Situation Specificity/Consistency of Aggressive Behavior," Child Behavior Therapy, I, No. 3 (1979), 265-66.

<sup>2</sup>Sandstrom, p. 152.

or that he or she had a cold. This makes it seem more serious than it was.<sup>1</sup>

A final defense mechanism that is important is projection. It is a method of avoiding guilt feelings by attributing one's own mistakes and bad features to others. For instance, a lazy person may accuse others of laziness.<sup>2</sup>

Educators have long been concerned with establishing a system to reinforce good student behavior in class. This should be perceived as more important than the attention they receive when they disrupt. A reward is defined as any visible reaction that an individual considers important. Reinforcement is a repetition of the same reward for the same behavior. When this behavior is reinforced, it endures and grows stronger. When a behavior is not reinforced, it weakens and disappears.<sup>3</sup>

Positive reinforcement is widely used today. A positive reinforcer is one that acts as a stimulus to the individual so that he or she is motivated to repeat the desired behavior. A teacher's commendations for quiet work give the student the attention he or she craves while stimulating him or her to repeat the quiet work behavior.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Gretchen Winkleman and Patricia Anzalone Howie, Behavior Modification: A Practical Guide for the Classroom Teacher (West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., 1977), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

One type of positive reinforcement is social reinforcement. Social reinforcement refers to behavior of others that tends to increase the frequency with which a child emits a behavior. For example, a smile serves as a social reinforcer if a smile from a teacher is followed by a student continuing to work on his or her assignment. This can be used either as a spontaneous teaching strategy for influencing student behavior or as a consequence in the contract between the parties.<sup>1</sup>

There are several advantages to employing social reinforcement. The first advantage is that it is easy to give. It takes very little time or effort. Another advantage is that children are unlikely to become satiated with social reinforcement. Furthermore, teachers and peers possess a vast array of social reinforcers. Since social reinforcement is available in almost every setting, such a program can be generalized to almost any situation. Teachers will almost never receive criticism for utilizing social reinforcement. This type of reinforcement can be very effective in changing behavior of children.<sup>2</sup>

Disadvantages of social reinforcement are that teachers are quite unskilled at providing adequate social reinforcement and making this reinforcement contingent upon students' appropriate behavior. This reinforcement must be

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<sup>1</sup>Jones and Jones, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

behavior descriptive. This indicates that as part of the praise statement the child should be told precisely what he or she is being praised for. Behavior descriptive reinforcement helps the child to make a discrimination between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the greatest disadvantage of social reinforcement, especially with seriously disruptive children, is that it may simply not be a strong enough reinforcer to bring about an immediate and defined behavior change. Research done by Walker, Hops, and Fiegenbaum in 1976 indicates that some children respond to adult praise neutrally or even negatively. Social reinforcement must be supplemented with other reinforcers or punishers when dealing with some students.<sup>2</sup>

Examples of punishers might be assigning the student to another seat in the room or, in an extreme case, removing the student from the room. The student might also be kept after school.

The value of rewards and punishments has long been a center of controversy. A classical and often cited experiment by E. B. Hurlock demonstrates that incentives that provide reward are more powerful motivators to

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<sup>1</sup>Hill M. Walker, The Acting-Out Child: Coping with Classroom Disruption (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>H. Walker, H. Hops, and E. Fiegenbaum, "Deviant Classroom Behavior as a Function of Combinations of Social and Token Reinforcement and Cost Contingency," Behavior Therapy, VII (1976), 76-78, cited in Jones and Jones, p. 264.

learning than incentives that provide mild punishment. Also, rewarding and punishing the student are more powerful than ignoring the student. Hurlock studied the relative effectiveness of praise, reproof, and ignoring of students' learning of arithmetic. The praise and reproof were administered to students as a group so that there was no informative value of specific errors or correct responses. She found that students made the most progress in arithmetic when praised, next most progress under reproof, and least progress when ignored.<sup>1</sup>

While rewards are more effective for motivating students to learn than are mild punishments, rewards have many disadvantages. First, the teacher who uses rewards must provide a barrier against students obtaining them by any shortcut not requiring the completion of the desired instructional task. Second, too much emphasis on rewards encourages docility and deference to authority. Students may learn that one does things solely to obtain rewards from the person in authority.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years some programs have used candies and other tokens as reinforcers. Such rewards are unnecessary and may even be harmful, especially when used in the

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<sup>1</sup>E. B. Hurlock, "An Evaluation of Certain Incentives Used in School Work," Journal of Educational Psychology, XV (1925), 145-59, cited in Carl J. Wallen and Ladonna L. Wallen, Effective Classroom Management (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

classroom. A smile or a star on a chart may be more useful. Even when treating children with severe behavior disorders, any use of nurturance materials invites confusion in the child's perception of either teacher or parental roles or both.<sup>1</sup>

Activity curtailment is a more logical intervention than providing the student with candy for completing a task. An example of activity curtailment is restricting a child's behavior by requiring that he or she stay in for recess in order to complete work.<sup>2</sup>

Expulsion is another option that educators can exercise when dealing with extremely disruptive students. David Dagley cautions that it is not effective when dealing with special education students.

Expulsion is a short-sighted, negative, and over-reactive method of dealing with disruption. It is also expensive in terms of missed education, poor community relations, and lost state aid. In the case of special education students, the requisite causal inquiries are a terrible waste of human resources. Educators' time would be better spent learning behavior management techniques, developing other disciplinary options, and teaching these skills to colleagues. Trying to demonstrate that no causal relationship exists between a child's handicap and his or her disruptive behaviors is an exercise in futility.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Winkleman and Howie, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Jones and Jones, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>David L. Dagley, "Some Thoughts on Disciplining the Handicapped," Phi Delta Kappan, LXIII (1982), 697.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine if various strategies were effective when dealing with a disruptive student. In this chapter, the methods and procedures for treating the data and the sources and description of data-gathering instruments will be presented.

#### Methods and Procedures

The principal contacted the parent to get permission for the student to be involved in the study. He also communicated with the student so that the latter had a complete understanding.

A teachers' meeting was held to explain that the student was the subject of a study. The teachers who worked with the student were given a checklist on which his behaviors were recorded. (See appendix.) They were instructed to report specific positive and negative behaviors on a daily basis. These reports were made to the principal. This checklist was then completed once a week. In addition, the principal questioned teachers concerning their responses to his behavior. The involvement of other students in these situations was also analyzed. All of this

was entered in a log at the end of each day. The principal was the recorder.

A psychologist from Area 11 met with all teachers to discuss a point system indicating whether or not the subject had behaved appropriately. The psychologist observed that this point system had been employed very successfully to improve the behavior of disruptive children in nearby elementary schools. These students were about the same age as the subject. A 3" by 5" card was carried by the subject to recesses, vocal music, physical education, art and media. This card was used by instructors to record whether or not his behavior had been appropriate. He was evaluated at five-minute intervals. The teacher marked the card. This teacher would then sign his or her initials at the end of the period. (See appendix.)

This card was designed so that there was a positive side as well as a negative side. The positive part of the card was on the right side. A drawing of a mountain was used as a visual representation of progress. The student started at the bottom of the mountain and worked up. The card was numbered from one to twenty. When the student behaved appropriately for five minutes, one of the squares with a number in it was marked off. If he did well during the fifteen-minute morning recess, for example, the teacher would mark three of these squares. If he had four very good days in a row, he would earn a party for himself and the rest of his class.



The left side of the card dealt with negative behaviors. This part of the card was numbered from one to five. When the student misbehaved, one of these squares was marked. For example, he could receive a check for punching another student or swearing. This point system specified that he would lose recess privileges for the remainder of the day and vocal music, physical education, art, and media could also be affected, depending on the seriousness of the incident. Such problems obviously stopped his progress up the mountain for the day.

The psychologist emphasized the importance of the frequency and specification of reward and punishment. He also pointed to the need for follow-up meetings.

A social worker came into the building once a week to coach the student. Each coaching session lasted for thirty minutes. She worked with the student on gaining peer attention as well as asking peers to join in activities. They also worked on beginning and ending conversations and responding to teasing. The subject was involved in role playing. Part of these sessions were videotaped so he could view himself.

Close contact was maintained with the parents. Staffings, home visits, and telephone calls provided the writer with opportunities to learn about how the student responded to school and how well he was doing at home.

### Sources and Description of Data-Gathering Instruments

One source of information was the subject himself. Other students were used to give a more complete picture. Teachers constituted another source; the cards reflecting the student's behavior were reviewed frequently. The bus driver and the lunchroom aide also reported on his behavior. The psychologist and the learning disabilities consultant from Area 11 contributed ideas. The social worker from the same agency was another valuable source. The principal observed the subject's behavior in all settings.

### Summary

Methods, procedures, and sources and description of data-gathering instruments were presented in this chapter. The next chapter will present the data gained from this research. The final chapter will include a summary, conclusion and recommendations.

## Chapter 4

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine if various strategies had any effect on the behavior of a disruptive student. Data gained from careful observations and analyses of these observations will be presented in this chapter.

#### Findings and Analyses

An important source of data was a log kept every day. Critical incidences of the student's behaviors and responses to these behaviors are included in the following entries. Analyses of these behaviors are presented in this chapter as well as in Chapter 5.

1-7-82. J.F. had a good day today. He did exit the school bus at the end of the day crying. He explained that two male high-school students, one sophomore and one junior, were picking on him. They did this by calling him names and grabbing his coat. The principal asked him what had happened as he walked the student back to the bus. The subject did not tell him very much. The principal then got on the bus and talked to the other students involved. They pointed out that the subject was responsible for at least part of the problem because he swore at them. After some

questioning, the student admitted that he had sworn at the older students. All the students involved were told they must apologize to each other and avoid each other in the future. The older students were still rather upset with him so the subject was moved to the front of the bus near the driver. The older students were moved to the back of the bus.

The bus driver was in part responsible for this situation because he was not on the bus when the students boarded. He was a teacher as well, but it was pointed out that his absence promoted such problems.

This was a frequent occurrence. Sometimes other students would tease J.F., but he often cried to gain attention.

1-19-82. He had serious problems during the morning recess. Two sixth-grade girls and two fourth-grade girls saw him hit A.S. in the forehead. This incident was called to the playground teacher's attention. She questioned him and immediately sent him to the principal's office. He admitted that he was guilty of hitting the other student. When asked why he did this, he responded that he had been playing with A.S. and some other girls. They became involved in an argument about details of the game, and she made remarks that upset him. After checking with all the students, it was learned that these remarks were inconsequential. The principal told him that he would have to stay

in during recess for the rest of the day and all the following day.

His greatest problems came during recess. He had difficulty in handling these situations because they were so unstructured. This is just one example of overly aggressive behavior that endangered other students.

2-8-82. J.F. found Mr. B., the physical education teacher, in the hall before school and told him that other students were staring at him. This really upset him. Mr. B. told the principal that the student was pale and shaken. The teacher confronted the other fourth graders about this, and they admitted they were guilty. They were especially conscious of his snowsuit and cap, which were old and worn. Mr. B. talked to them about the effect this had on the subject's self-concept and what could be done to minimize problems in the future. Mr. B. went into their classroom because Mrs. L., the fourth-grade teacher, was involved in a teacher's meeting.

The principal did not become a part of this series of events because he did not want to draw unnecessary attention to the subject and his appearance.

2-24-82. J. F. had a good day in Mrs. L.'s classroom. In physical education class he did have some problems. S.A. and the subject were fighting with each other. Mr. B. pulled them apart. The student claimed that S.A. threw a bean bag at him, while she claimed he started it. These two could not work together all period so Mr. B. sent

them to the conference room and took their next recess away from them. The subject cooled off when he was kept in. The principal questioned Mr. B., each of the two students, and other students who witnessed their fighting. The outcome was that the subject had started the altercation. The principal talked with the student about these problems at length. He appeared to feel bad about what had happened and he apologized to Mr. B. and to S.A. He was told he would miss physical education classes for the next week because of his misbehavior. This meant that he missed two classes. He accepted this calmly.

This student sometimes had problems in physical education and art because these were not as structured as the regular classroom. He really enjoyed these classes because he liked to be with the other students in a relaxed setting.

3-22-82. He had problems today. A.S., a girl who used to attend school here, came back to visit. Because of limited space, Mrs. L. placed her in the seat next to him. The student sat in the back of the room near Mrs. L.'s desk. He began to put on a display for her. He used gestures, made faces, and laughed so much that it was difficult for the others to learn. He would continue this for several minutes at a time. Mrs. L. told the principal that she ignored his behavior for awhile, but when this strategy did not work she moved him into the hall.

The subject had problems whenever the routine was changed. The return of A.S. may have been too much for him.

3-29-82. J.F. had a very poor day. This morning Mrs. L.'s sister came to visit her for a minute. They stood out in the hall near the door to talk. D.M., another boy, told him to pull his pants down so he stood up, unbuckled his jeans, and unzipped his pants. D.M. and the subject were trying to impress L.K., a girl who sat nearby. Mrs. L. found out about it a few minutes later. She told the principal during the morning recess. The student would not admit that he had done anything wrong. The principal then questioned five other students, including L.K. and D.M., the latter confessing his guilt. L.K. was very embarrassed by this situation. She did not want to talk about it. The subject still did not want to state that he was a part of the incident. The principal threatened to call his parents. He broke down and told the principal everything he had done. The principal called his mother and asked her to come in. The principal, Mrs. L., the subject and his mother held a conference that afternoon after school. J.F. would have been kept in until four for two days, but he did not have transportation home. Instead, D.M. and J.F. were kept in during recesses for two days. The conference was productive in terms of communication. His mother promised her support.

The student did not know how to resist peer pressure when other students suggested he do something. It appeared that he was willing to risk getting into trouble to gain attention.

He did well in April. He had occasional problems but they were not serious. Mrs. L. and the other teachers learned to ignore certain attention-getting devices while being specific in praising him for doing well. J.F. did such a good job that he earned a party for himself and his classmates. The principal took the class outside for half an hour so the students could play soccer. The class, and especially the student, enjoyed the party. The only time he had problems came when he did not understand the rules. He argued with another student about the responsibility of the goalie. The two students became quite vocal before they cooled off and resumed playing. The subject told his mother that night that he had really enjoyed himself.

5-3-82. The student had a poor day today. J.F. called another student an unmentionable name. He did this because he thought K.C., a boy in his class, had called him a sissy. All of this took place on the football field during physical education class. Mr. B., the teacher, heard him and tried to talk to him but the subject started chasing the other student in circles. They were stopped and sent to the principal's office. The principal asked Mr. B., K.C., the other students in the class, and the subject what had happened. The subject admitted he had used profanity and that he was not sure what the other student had said to him. He told the principal he became upset and lost control of himself. K.C. admitted that he was wrong to call the subject a sissy, but he insisted he did not mean that much



by it. The subject appeared to feel sorry for what he had said. He was removed from physical education classes for one week. He was sent to the conference room to work on homework assignments. He demonstrated a positive attitude in the conference room. The two boys resolved their differences.

The student could not always control his use of profanity and obscene gestures. This was very upsetting to the other students and it continues to be a problem.

### Summary

This chapter presented the data for this case study. Critical incidences detailing the student's behaviors, responses to these behaviors, and analyses of both were included. The final chapter will detail the summary conclusions and recommendations.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Investigation

The purpose of this study was to determine if various strategies of reward and punishment were effective in dealing with a disruptive student. Social reinforcement was the first strategy explored. Additional recess time and other special privileges based on a progress card were also discussed. The use of activity curtailment and removal to a time-out room was considered, as was ignoring a certain amount of behaviors that disrupt a class.

Data for this case study were collected in a daily log with the principal acting as recorder. This log was based on observations of the subject, other students, teachers, the principal, and other school personnel. Critical incidents based on this log and the progress card were then compiled.

#### Summary of the Findings

Social reinforcement was found to be an effective strategy. It was used extensively, especially in structured settings.

Additional recess time and other special privileges

based on the progress card were also used with success. One had to make sure that these bonuses were well deserved.

Ignoring a certain amount of disruptive behavior was also utilized. This strategy met with only limited success because in many cases it was not strong enough to curb certain behaviors that made learning for others in class very difficult.

When ignoring disruptive behavior was not sufficient, activity curtailment was an option that could be implemented. This was usually effective, but one had to make sure the punishment was appropriate because this student needed recesses to release energy built up in the classroom.

Another strategy that proved to be valuable was removal to a time-out room. When lesser responses, such as ignoring disruptive behavior, were not adequate, this served as the final consequence. This gave the student a chance to cool off and reflect on his behavior and what he could do to avoid problems in the future.

### Conclusions

Social reinforcement was found to hold considerable promise for working with J.F. This student needed a great deal of positive attention. He wanted all the other students to notice him, even if this were sometimes in a negative light. He also wanted others, especially teachers, to sympathize with him. He was trying to get as much attention as possible through such defense mechanisms as

aggression and regression. Social reinforcement made it possible for him to receive such attention because he was monitored in many different situations. These included the classroom, physical education, vocal music, art, recesses, and the lunchroom. The progress card became a constant reminder that he needed to behave appropriately. Mrs. L., his classroom teacher, has observed that this student needed social reinforcement more than anything else. Instructors using social reinforcement must make sure the reinforcement is behavior descriptive and immediate.

Additional recess time and other special privileges used in connection with the progress card were strategies that were effective. The subject and the other students had to be involved in this program. Otherwise, the other students were sometimes guilty of enticing him to cause problems. The rules for earning more recess time, special privileges, or a party had to be very well defined. As a result, the subject and the other students understood what they were to do and the goals toward which they were working. The student earned one of these parties during the year because he had had four excellent days in a row. The principal took the children outside for thirty minutes to play soccer. The subject and the other students in his class appeared to be very proud of their accomplishment because they knew they had earned it. A result of this party was that his peers viewed J.F. in a more positive light.

Ignoring a certain amount of disruptive behavior was

another alternative for the teachers. Mrs. L., his classroom teacher, used this effectively. She admitted, however, that this was not always strong enough to deal with the problem. She would then move to the use of more stringent measures so she could continue class. This was a frequent occurrence.

Activity curtailment was an option that was sometimes useful. This could be employed after J.F. had had problems in the classroom, special classes, such as physical education, vocal music, and art, or during recess. His overly aggressive behavior sometimes endangered other students at recess and in physical education. Once the principal was certain he was guilty, the first step was usually to remove him from recesses. He was placed in the conference room and instructed that he was to work on his homework. He was closely supervised by the principal. He was allowed only one trip to the rest room or the pencil sharpener during this time. The principal supervised him when he made these trips. Activity curtailment must be immediate in order to be meaningful.

The time-out room was a similar concept that provided another alternative. After Mrs. L. or another teacher had ignored disruptive behavior for so long, this strategy became the final consequence. The subject did not like being placed in a time-out room because of the isolation. The conference room discussed above served as time-out room for this study. Provision must be made for a responsible

staff member to supervise the student in a time-out room.

All of these strategies had a very positive effect on J.F. The incidence of disruptive behavior was much lower at the end of the year. He still had room for improvement, but this student had made great strides.

### Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Administrators and teachers working with the disruptive student should utilize social reinforcement whenever applicable. They may need additional training in order to be skillful in its use.

2. Additional recess time and other special privileges based on a carefully administered reward system can be helpful when not overdone.

3. Ignoring a certain amount of disruptive behavior is another strategy that can help with minor to fairly serious problems. Teachers will probably have to be more direct when dealing with serious problems.

4. Activity curtailment and removal to a time-out room can be very effective when the strategies previously mentioned do not have an effect on the student. Additional training in these areas may be necessary because careful supervision of the time-out room is essential. The Assertive Discipline Model, developed by Lee Canter,

provides guidelines for establishing a structured time-out room.

An area that demands additional study is that of the disruptive student in such unstructured settings as recess, physical education, vocal music, and media. Great emphasis must be placed on recognizing what the student does well in these environments. The time-out room and its implications for disruptive students is another area that deserves attention. Still another area that should be explored is promoting parental involvement in the program when dealing with the disruptive student.

Administrators and teachers must address the needs of the disruptive student as well as others in the classroom. They must become skillful in using such strategies as social reinforcement, ignoring certain behaviors, and employing activity curtailment in a time-out room. If they are to make progress toward the goal of working effectively with disruptive students, they must become positive and sophisticated in their approach. This will enable them to come much closer to a goal that is among the most important in education.

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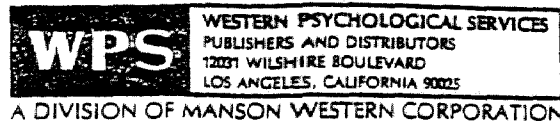
## APPENDIXES

Appendix A

**BURKS' BEHAVIOR RATING SCALES**  
**ADMINISTRATION BOOKLET**

by Harold F. Burks, Ph.D.

Published by



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
School \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
Rated by \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate **each** and **every** item by putting the number or the most appropriate descriptive statement in the box opposite each item. The 5 descriptive statements are given below:

- Number 1. You have not noticed this behavior at all.  
Number 2. You have noticed the behavior to a slight degree.  
Number 3. You have noticed the behavior to a considerable degree.  
Number 4. You have noticed the behavior to a large degree.  
Number 5. You have noticed the behavior to a very large degree.

1. Shows erratic, flighty or scattered behavior. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
2. Questions indicate a worry about the future. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
3. Maintains other children pick on him. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
4. Does not ask questions. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
5. Upset if makes a mistake. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
6. Perseverates, cannot shift responses. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
7. Is easily distracted, lacks continuity of effort and perseverance. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
8. Complains he never gets his fair share of things. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
9. Gives inappropriate responses. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
10. Shows overremorse for wrong doing. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
11. Attention span not increased by punishment or reward. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
12. Does not show imagination. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
13. Will not forgive others. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
14. Is upset if things do not turn out perfect. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
15. Attention span is short. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
16. Has trouble remembering things. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
17. Accuses others of things they actually did not do. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
18. Shows poor vocabulary. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
19. Complains others do not like him. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
20. Cannot finish what he is doing; jumps to something else. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
21. Blames himself if things go wrong. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
22. Does not show common sense. \_\_\_\_\_ ☐

10 1 15 3

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W-148A

Please rate **each** and **every** item by putting the number of the most appropriate descriptive statement in the box opposite each item. The 5 descriptive statements are given below:

- Number 1. You have not noticed this behavior at all.  
 Number 2. You have noticed the behavior to a slight degree.  
 Number 3. You have noticed the behavior to a considerable degree.  
 Number 4. You have noticed the behavior to a large degree.  
 Number 5. You have noticed the behavior to a very large degree.

23. Shows many fears. ☐
24. Tells bizarre stories. ☐
25. Shows poor reading. ☐
26. Becomes overexcited easily. ☐
27. Uses unintelligible language. ☐
28. Displays a don't care attitude; does what he wants. ☐
29. Shows poor spelling. ☐
30. Tells falsehoods. ☐
31. Is hyperactive and restless. ☐
32. Shows daydreaming. ☐
33. Appears tense. ☐
34. Does not follow through on promises. ☐
35. Shows explosive and unpredictable behavior. ☐
36. Shows tics and grimaces without apparent reason. ☐
37. Wornes too much. ☐
38. Takes things which do not belong to him. ☐
39. Follows academic directions poorly. ☐
40. Secretly laughs or talks to himself. ☐
41. Shows little respect for authority. ☐
42. Flushes easily. ☐
43. Rotates or rocks his body. ☐
44. Assignments are poorly written. ☐
45. Is tardy. ☐
46. Is impulsive. ☐
47. Makes weird drawings. ☐
48. Is involved in undesirable escapades. ☐
49. Appears nervous. ☐
50. Is unaware of what is going on around him. ☐
51. Homework is not done or incomplete. ☐
52. Cannot control self (will speak out or jump out of seat). ☐
53. Is truant. ☐

Please rate **each** and **every** item by putting the number or the most appropriate descriptive statement in the box opposite each item. The 5 descriptive statements are given below:

Number 1. You have not noticed this behavior at all.

Number 2. You have noticed the behavior to a slight degree.

Number 3. You have noticed the behavior to a considerable degree.

Number 4. You have noticed the behavior to a large degree.

Number 5. You have noticed the behavior to a very large degree.

54. Avoids physical contact in play. ☐
55. Becomes angry quickly. ☐
56. Acts as non-conformist. ☐
57. Is stubborn and uncooperative. ☐
58. Has trouble holding on to things. ☐
59. Gets hurt in physical play. ☐
60. Is rebellious if disciplined. ☐
61. Becomes angry if asked to do something. ☐
62. Shows poor coordination in large muscle activities. ☐
63. Wears unusual clothing styles. ☐
64. Gets tired quickly. ☐
65. Handwriting is poor. ☐
66. Denies responsibility for own actions. ☐
67. Is quickly frustrated and loses emotional control. ☐
68. Associated with loners. ☐
69. Drawings and paintings are messy. ☐
70. Does things his own way. ☐
71. Will not rough and tumble with others. ☐
72. Accidentally runs into people and objects. ☐
73. Explodes under stress. ☐
74. Rejects classmates in hostile manner. ☐
75. Appears physically lethargic. ☐
76. Will not take suggestions from others. ☐
77. Flares up at classmates if teased or pushed. ☐
78. "Style" of behaving deliberately different from most. ☐

6 7 8 9 10 11

Please rate **each** and **every** item by putting the number of the most appropriate descriptive statement in the box opposite each item. The 5 descriptive statements are given below:

Number 1. You have not noticed this behavior at all.

Number 2. You have noticed the behavior to a slight degree.

Number 3. You have noticed the behavior to a considerable degree.

Number 4. You have noticed the behavior to a large degree.

Number 5. You have noticed the behavior to a very large degree.

- |   |  |  |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 79. Sulks.  |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 80. Is difficult to get to know.                                      |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 81. Depreciates and distrusts own abilities.                          |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 82. Laughs when others are in trouble.                                |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 83. Is dependent on others to lead him around.                        |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 84. Hits or pushes others.  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 85. Appears unhappy.  |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 86. Shows little feeling when others are upset.                       |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 87. Is overobedient.  |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 88. Is easily satisfied with inferior performance.                    |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 89. Seems to welcome punishment.                                      |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 90. Withdraws quickly from group activities; prefers to work by self. |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 91. Avoids competition.   |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 92. Wants to boss others.   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 93. Is easily led.  |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 94. Is sly.   |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 95. Deliberately puts himself in position of being criticized.        |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 96. Is sarcastic.   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 97. Is easily frustrated and gives up passively.                      |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 98. Does not show feelings.   |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 99. Gives picture of "poor me."                                       |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 100. Teases others.   |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 101. Acts silly.  |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 102. Wants others to do things for him.                               |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 103. Feelings easily hurt.  |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 104. Shows little self-confidence.                                    |  |  |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |
| 105. Clings to adults.  |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 106. Plays tricks on other children.                                  |  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                          |                          |
| 107. Appears disinterested in class work or others.                   |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 108. Appears depressed.   |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 109. Seeks constant praise.   |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 110. Plays the clown of the class.                                    |  |  |                          |                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## Appendix B

### Mountain Representation of Progress

